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(54) **AUTHENTICATION OF SERVICE REQUESTS USING A COMMUNICATIONS INITIATION FEATURE**

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CPC H04L 41/00; H04L 51/32; H04L 51/046; H04L 12/24; H04L 67/22; H04L 67/30; H04L 67/303; H04L 67/306

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See application file for complete search history.

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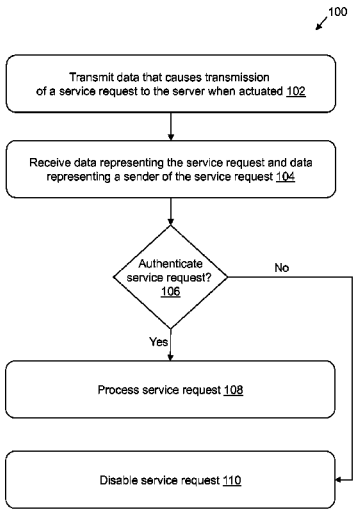
(57) **ABSTRACT**

Described are computer-based methods and apparatuses, including computer program products, for facilitating communications initiated through a social networking account. A detected message communicated using a social networking account can be determined to satisfy a response criteria. Code for displaying a communications initiation feature on a customer communications apparatus associated with the social networking account can be transmitted. Selection information representing a selection of the communications initiation feature can be received and can include a parameter associated with the selection and origin information. The selection information can be validated by determining that the selection is associated with the social networking account and by comparing the parameter with a stored credential associated with the communications initiation feature. When the selection is validated, the communications can be facilitated.

30 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets



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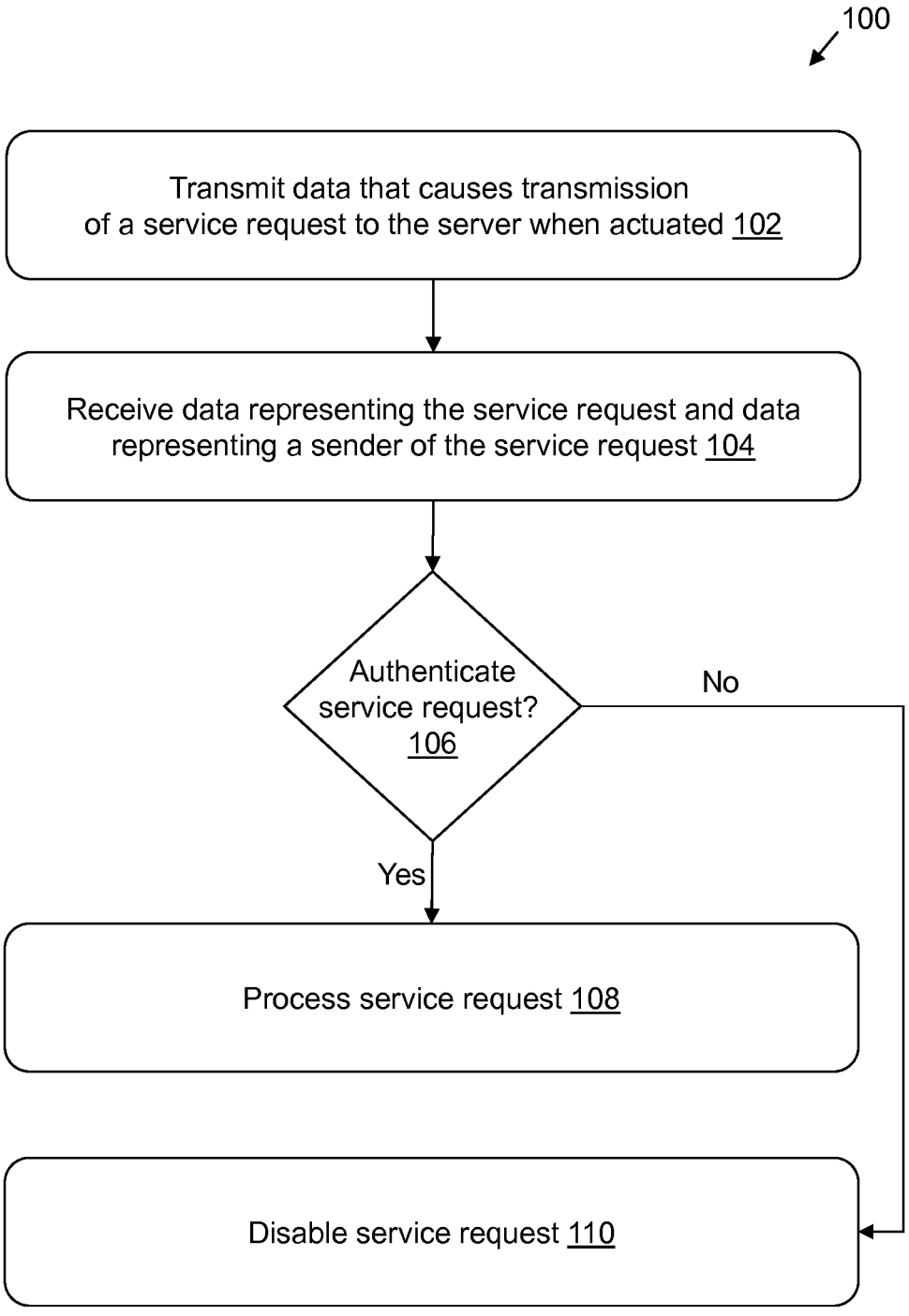
100
Transmit data that causes transmission of a service request to the server when actuated 102
Receive data representing the service request and data representing a sender of the service request 104
Authenticate service request? 106
No
Yes
Process service request 108
Disable service request 110

FIG. 1

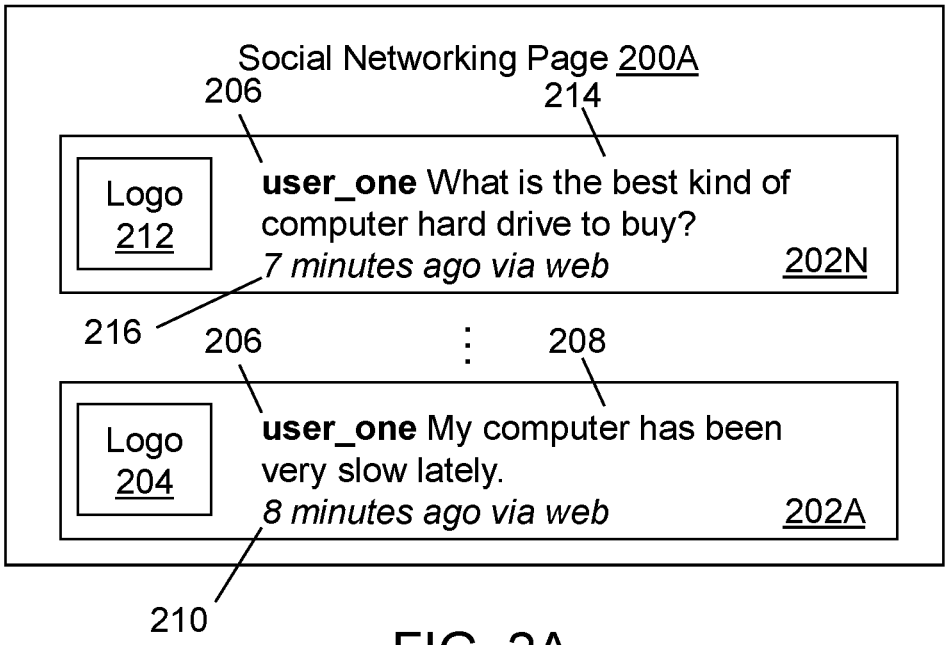
Social Networking Page 200A
206
214
Logo 212
user_one What is the best kind of computer hard drive to buy?
7 minutes ago via web
202N
216
206
208
Logo 204
user_one My computer has been very slow lately.
8 minutes ago via web
202A
210

FIG. 2A

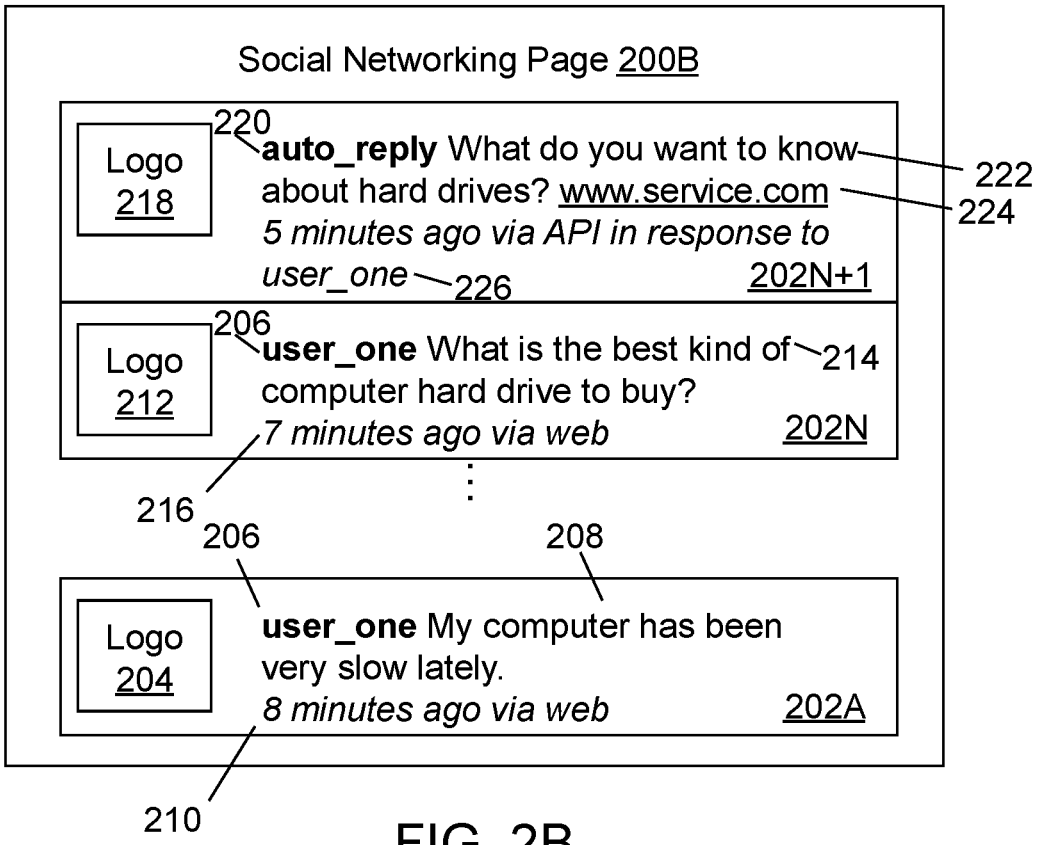
Social Networking Page 200B
220
Logo 218
auto_reply What do you want to know about hard drives? www.service.com
222
224
5 minutes ago via API in response to user_one
226
202N+1
206
Logo 212
user_one What is the best kind of computer hard drive to buy?
214
7 minutes ago via web
202N
216
206
208
Logo 204
user_one My computer has been very slow lately.
8 minutes ago via web
202A
210

FIG. 2B

AUTHENTICATION OF SERVICE REQUESTS USING A COMMUNICATIONS INITIATION FEATURE

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/625,984, filed Apr. 18, 2012, and entitled "Authentication of Service Requests," which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety for all purposes.

This application relates to and is assigned to the same entity as the co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/967,782, filed on Dec. 14, 2010, entitled "Authentication of Service Requests Initiated From a Social Networking Site," the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference in its entirety, and attached hereto as Appendix A. The systems and methods described herein can be used in combination with the systems and methods described in Appendix A. For example, the authentication techniques described in Appendix A can be used to authenticate users that invoke service requests, as described herein.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The technical field relates generally to computer-based methods and apparatuses, including computer program products, for authentication of service requests.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A brief summary of various exemplary embodiments is presented. Some simplifications and omissions may be made in the following summary, which is intended to highlight and introduce some aspects of the various exemplary embodiments, but not limit the scope of the invention. Detailed descriptions of a preferred exemplary embodiment adequate to allow those of ordinary skill in the art to make and use the inventive concepts will follow in the later sections.

In one aspect, a computerized method for authenticating user service requests is presented. A server transmits data that causes transmission of a service request to the server when actuated. The server receives data representing the service request and data representing a sender of the service request. The server compares (a) the data representing the service request, the data representing the sender of the service request, or both, against (b) pre-defined criteria associated with the data that causes transmission of the service request. The server processes the service request from the sender if the comparison authenticates the service request.

In other examples, any of the aspects above can include one or more of the following features. The data that causes transmission of a service request to the server when actuated comprises an HTTP link.

The techniques, which include both methods and apparatuses, described herein can provide one or more of the following advantages. Website links, such as HTTP links, can be authenticated based on the user that invoked the link, as well as pre-defined criteria for the link, such as an expiration time, a number of users that can invoke the link, and/or the like. Data received about service requests and/or the users that invoke the service requests can be used to appropriately tailor the service request for each user.

Other aspects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, illustrating the principles of the invention by way of example only.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing and other aspects, features, and advantages of the present invention, as well as the invention itself, will be more fully understood from the following description of various embodiments, when read together with the accompanying drawings.

FIG. **1** is a flow chart showing an example method for processing a service request.

FIGS. **2**A and **2**B are diagrams of an example social networking page for a social networking site according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In general, computerized systems and methods are provided for creating links (e.g., web page links, such as HTML links) that can be authenticated by a server. Data about the links and/or the user(s) that invoke the links can be used to authenticate the link based on pre-defined criteria stored for the link. The service request links can be configured based on the pre-defined criteria. For example, the service request links can expire based on the pre-defined criteria such that the links can be invoked only for a predetermined period of time, can only be invoked by a predetermined number of users, can only be invoked by particular users (e.g., based on profile data of the user), etc. This data can be used to navigate the invoking user to the proper location (e.g., to a service request (such as chat or video), or to a particular web page).

FIG. **1** is a flow chart showing an exemplary method **100** for processing a service request. At step **102**, the server transmits data that causes transmission of a service request to the server when actuated. At step **104**, the server receives data representing the service request and data representing a sender of the service request. At step **106**, the server authenticates the service request. If the server authenticates the service request at step **106**, the method proceeds to step **108**, and the server processes the service request. If the server does not authenticate the service request at step **106**, the method proceeds to step **110**, and the server disables the service request.

Referring to step **102**, the data that causes transmission of a service request to the server when actuated can be, for example, an HTTP link. For example, the link, when actuated (and authenticated as described with respect to step **106** below) can initiate any type of a service request, such as online text chat, audio chat, presentation of a support page (e.g., frequently asked questions), presentation of a coupon, video chat, and/or other types of service requests. The server can send service requests to a remote user for help with navigating a web page, to a remote user in response to a social media message (e.g., in response to a Twitter tweet or a Facebook post), to a remote user by email, a data messaging service (e.g., short messaging service (SMS)), etc. As is described further below, administrators of the server (and related components) can set pre-defined criteria for the service request (e.g., for an HTML link) that configure when the service request can be invoked (e.g., a time expiration).

Referring to step **104**, the data representing the service request can include, for example, data about the service request (e.g., about an HTML link), and/or data about the user that invoked the service request (e.g., about the user that clicked the HTML link). For example, if the server transmits an HTML link to a web page, the data representing the service

request can include identifying data for the service request (e.g., so the system can identify which service request was invoked), a number of times the HTML link was invoked prior to the current invocation (e.g., a number of times the link was clicked), an amount of time the HTML link has been on the web page, and/or other data about the service request.

Referring further to step **104**, the data representing a sender of the service request can include data about the party that invoked the service request. For example, this data may include social networking information, as described in Appendix A (e.g., a user profile for the user from the social networking site).

Referring to step **106**, the server authenticates the service request. For example, unless certain properties of the service request are satisfied (e.g., a time limit has not expired, a pre-set number of users have not already invoked the service request, the invoking user matches pre-defined criteria (e.g., the service request was sent to the user, the user is a follower of a social networking site, located in a particular geographic location, and/or the link)), then the server will not authenticate the service request.

Referring further to step **106**, the server can compare the data received at step **104** with stored data for the service request. For example, in some embodiments the server compares (a) the data representing the service request, the data representing the sender of the service request, or both, against (b) pre-defined criteria associated with the data the server transmitted in step **102**. For example, the pre-defined criteria can be defined by the system administrator. For example, for an HTTP link, the administrator can set a number of times the link can be clicked before the link expires (e.g., can no longer be clicked by a user to invoke the service request), an amount of time the link is active until the link expires, required social networking profile information (e.g., indicative of the originator, such as geographical location and/or other user profile information), etc.

Referring further to step **106**, if the server authenticates the service request such that the pre-defined criteria are satisfied (e.g., if the time limit associated with the service request has not expired, if the maximum number of users has not invoked the service request, if the social networking data associated with the user that invoked the request matches the pre-defined criteria, etc.), the server processes the service request at step **108**. The server can process the service request by setting up the service request, such as by transmitting a coupon to the sender, setting up an online chat with the sender, setting up a video chat with the sender, sending the user to a help page, and/or setting up any other type of service request.

If the server determines the service request is not authenticated (e.g., if the time limit associated with the service request expired, if the maximum number of users already invoked the service request, if the social networking data associated with the user that invoked the request does not match the pre-defined criteria, etc.), then the server disables the service request at step **110**. For example, the server may transmit back to the sender an HTTP error page, a blank page, a page that indicates the link expired and therefore will not be completed, etc.

The authentication allows administrators and agents of the server to create and/or reconnect service requests (e.g., click-to-chat links) that can be limited to a number of users, time expirations, social networking attributes of the sender, etc. For example, if an agent is communicating with a user via online chat and the conversation is dropped, the server can create a link that allows the visitor to return back to the agent he was chatting with, but will only work based on pre-defined criteria associated with the link (e.g., a set number of clicks, time expiration, etc.). The link itself can be sent to the visitor as a regular HTTP link, as SMS, email, or via the original chat itself.

As an example, assume an agent is engaged in a service request with a user (e.g., online chat), and the agent needs to re-boot their computer. The agent can send the user a link so agent can be re-connected with the user after the reboot to resume their conversation. Advantageously, while the server can transmit a link that allows the user to re-engage the service request, the system can use pre-defined criteria to ensure only the same user can re-engage the service request (e.g., based on social networking data), and that the agent is still connected to the system (e.g., limit the link's active time to one hour).

As another example, assume an agent is busy but wants to talk (e.g., online chat, video chat, voice chat) with a user, and the agent determines the best time for a chat is between 4-5 PM EST. The agent (via the server) can send the user a link that is valid only from 4-5 PM (e.g., if the user clicks the link between 4-5 PM, the server will process the service request, otherwise the server will not process the service request). For example, if the user clicks the link outside of the 4-5 PM window, then the server can redirect the user to a landing page.

As another example, the server can use the links to initiate a call sequence. For example, the agent may be available for a call before 5 PM that day. The server can send the user a link that is valid only until 5 PM (e.g., if the user clicks the link any time before 5 PM that day, the server will process the service request, otherwise the server will not process the service request). If properly invoked, the server will initiate a call sequence between the user and the agent.

As another example, the server can use the links for an advertisement campaign (e.g., for marketing content). The server can send links such that the first users that click the link (e.g., the first 100 users) get a special discount (e.g., are presented with a coupon). As another example, the link can be used to keep track of a number of times people scan a bar code to keep track of how many users scan the code. The user can then be presented with a coupon related to the bar code, establish a service request (e.g., chat), and/or the like.

As another example, the validation can validate the sender that invokes the service request (e.g., to verify the sender). For example, social networking parameters (e.g., a profile page) can be used to verify the sender (e.g., if the request is transmitted from a social networking site). For example, a company may monitor tweets posted to Twitter. The company may see a tweet that states "I don't like the services of Company." The Company can use the server (e.g., manually or automatically) to send a link to the author of the tweet to invoke a service request. For example, the link can be used to invoke a chat with a Company representative (via online chat, video chat, etc.) to discuss their dislikes of the Company, to send the user to a support page to help explain the Company's services, etc. The link, once clicked, can navigate the user to any type of service request channel (such as chat, video, a support page, etc.) based on the time the link exists, the number of clicks, and/or the social parameters of the user (e.g., who the user is, and what the user's location is, etc.). As an example, the social parameters can be used to navigate visitors from Europe to a European chat page, visitors from the US to a US chat page, etc. The social networking parameters can be used to tailor how the service request channels are invoked for each particular user.

The above-described techniques can be implemented in digital and/or analog electronic circuitry, or in computer hardware, firmware, software, or in combinations of them. The

implementation can be as a computer program product, i.e., a computer program tangibly embodied in a machine-readable storage device, for execution by, or to control the operation of, a data processing apparatus, e.g., a programmable processor, a computer, and/or multiple computers. A computer program can be written in any form of computer or programming language, including source code, compiled code, interpreted code and/or machine code, and the computer program can be deployed in any form, including as a stand-alone program or as a subroutine, element, or other unit suitable for use in a computing environment. A computer program can be deployed to be executed on one computer or on multiple computers at one or more sites.

Method steps can be performed by one or more processors executing a computer program to perform functions of the invention by operating on input data and/or generating output data. Method steps can also be performed by, and an apparatus can be implemented as, special purpose logic circuitry, e.g., a FPGA (field programmable gate array), a FPAA (field-programmable analog array), a CPLD (complex programmable logic device), a PSoC (Programmable System-on-Chip), ASIP (application-specific instruction-set processor), or an ASIC (application-specific integrated circuit). Subroutines can refer to portions of the computer program and/or the processor/special circuitry that implement one or more functions.

Processors suitable for the execution of a computer program include, by way of example, both general and special purpose microprocessors, and any one or more processors of any kind of digital or analog computer. Generally, a processor receives instructions and data from a read-only memory or a random access memory or both. The essential elements of a computer are a processor for executing instructions and one or more memory devices for storing instructions and/or data. Memory devices, such as a cache, can be used to temporarily store data. Memory devices can also be used for long-term data storage. Generally, a computer also includes, or is operatively coupled to receive data from or transfer data to, or both, one or more mass storage devices for storing data, e.g., magnetic, magneto-optical disks, or optical disks. A computer can also be operatively coupled to a communications network in order to receive instructions and/or data from the network and/or to transfer instructions and/or data to the network. Computer-readable storage devices suitable for embodying computer program instructions and data include all forms of volatile and non-volatile memory, including by way of example semiconductor memory devices, e.g., DRAM, SRAM, EPROM, EEPROM, and flash memory devices; magnetic disks, e.g., internal hard disks or removable disks; magneto-optical disks; and optical disks, e.g., CD, DVD, HD-DVD, and Blu-ray disks. The processor and the memory can be supplemented by and/or incorporated in special purpose logic circuitry.

To provide for interaction with a user, the above described techniques can be implemented on a computer in communication with a display device, e.g., a CRT (cathode ray tube), plasma, or LCD (liquid crystal display) monitor, for displaying information to the user and a keyboard and a pointing device, e.g., a mouse, a trackball, a touchpad, or a motion sensor, by which the user can provide input to the computer (e.g., interact with a user interface element). Other kinds of devices can be used to provide for interaction with a user as well; for example, feedback provided to the user can be any form of sensory feedback, e.g., visual feedback, auditory feedback, or tactile feedback; and input from the user can be received in any form, including acoustic, speech, and/or tactile input. The above described techniques can also be implemented on mobile devices (e.g., a smartphone, a personal digital assistant device, a cellular telephone, a laptop).

The above described techniques can be implemented in a distributed computing system that includes a back-end component. The back-end component can, for example, be a data server, a middleware component, and/or an application server. The above described techniques can be implemented in a distributed computing system that includes a front-end component. The front-end component can, for example, be a client computer having a graphical user interface, a Web browser through which a user can interact with an example implementation, and/or other graphical user interfaces for a transmitting device. The above described techniques can be implemented in a distributed computing system that includes any combination of such back-end, middleware, or front-end components.

The computing system can include clients and servers. A client and a server are generally remote from each other and typically interact through a communication network. The relationship of client and server arises by virtue of computer programs running on the respective computers and having a client-server relationship to each other.

The components of the computing system can be interconnected by any form or medium of digital or analog data communication (e.g., a communication network). Examples of communication networks include circuit-based and packet-based networks. Packet-based networks can include, for example, the Internet, a carrier internet protocol (IP) network (e.g., local area network (LAN), wide area network (WAN), campus area network (CAN), metropolitan area network (MAN), home area network (HAN)), a private IP network, an IP private branch exchange (IPBX), a wireless network (e.g., radio access network (RAN), 802.11 network, 802.16 network, general packet radio service (GPRS) network, HiperLAN), and/or other packet-based networks. Circuit-based networks can include, for example, the public switched telephone network (PSTN), a private branch exchange (PBX), a wireless network (e.g., RAN, bluetooth, code-division multiple access (CDMA) network, time division multiple access (TDMA) network, global system for mobile communications (GSM) network), and/or other circuit-based networks.

Devices of the computing system and/or computing devices can include, for example, a computer, a computer with a browser device, a telephone, an IP phone, a mobile device (e.g., cellular phone, personal digital assistant (PDA) device, laptop computer, electronic mail device, iPhone available from Apple®), a server, a rack with one or more processing cards, special purpose circuitry, and/or other communication devices. The browser device includes, for example, a computer (e.g., desktop computer, laptop computer) with a world wide web browser (e.g., Microsoft® Internet Explorer® available from Microsoft Corporation, Mozilla® Firefox available from Mozilla Corporation, Chrome available from Google®, Safari available from Apple®, etc.). A mobile computing device includes, for example, a Blackberry®. IP phones include, for example, a Cisco® Unified IP Phone 7985G available from Cisco System, Inc, and/or a Cisco® Unified Wireless Phone 7920 available from Cisco System, Inc.

One skilled in the art will realize the invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential characteristics thereof. The foregoing embodiments are therefore to be considered in all respects illustrative rather than limiting of the invention described herein. Scope of the invention is thus indicated by the appended claims, rather than by the foregoing description,

and all changes that come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are therefore intended to be embraced therein.

FIGS. **2**A and **2**B are diagrams of example social networking pages **200**A and **200**B, respectively, for a social networking site according to the present invention. Social networking page **200**A includes posted messages **202**A through **202**N (collectively posted messages **202**). Posted message **202**A can include a logo **204**, username user_one **206**, content **208** (i.e., "My computer has been very slow lately"), and posting information **210** (i.e., "8 minutes ago via web"). The username user_one **206** indicates which user posted the message **202**A (e.g., a user of a user device). This can be advantageous, for example, to tell users apart when multiple user devices are posting messages for a particular message thread or message board. The content **208** can include the text that the posting user user_one **206** entered for the posted message **202**A. The posting information **210** can indicate how long ago user_one **206** posted the message **202**A (i.e., 8 minutes ago) and how user_one **206** posted the message (i.e., via the web).

Posted message **202**N can include a logo **212**, username user_one **206**, content **214** (i.e., "What is the best kind of computer hard drive to buy?"), and posting information **216** (i.e., "7 minutes ago via web"). Posted messages **202** are used for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to be limiting. One skilled in the art can appreciate that the information contained within the posted messages **202** can be modified without departing from the spirit of the techniques described herein.

The social media account associated with user_one **206** (where "user_one" is a screen name representative of a particular user device or of an operator of the user device) can post message **202**A to the social networking server **102**. One minute later user_one **206** posted the posted (using a user device **104**) message **202**N to the social networking server **102**. User_one **206** can configure his account with the social networking site to control which other users can see posted messages **202**A and **202**N. There can be posted messages by other users between posted messages **202**A and **202**N (e.g., a different user device can post a message in response to posted message **202**A). For example, all people following the posts on social networking page **200**A can see posted message **202**A and can choose to post a message in response. Similarly, for example, any person that user_one **206** has established a relationship within the social networking site (e.g., friends) can view the posted message **202**A, and/or any user device can view posted message **202**A.

The social networking page **200**B in FIG. **2**B includes posted messages **202**A and **202**N from FIG. **2**A and also includes posted message **202**N+1. Posted message **202**N+1 includes a logo **218**, username auto_reply **220**, content **222** (i.e., "What do you want to know about hard drives?"), a link **224** that causes transmission of a service request to a monitoring server, and posting information **226** (i.e., "5 minutes ago via API in response to user_one"). The posting information **226** indicates that posted message **202**N+1 was posted by auto_reply **220** (e.g., a user with the screen name "auto_reply," which may correspond to an individual user or a company) five minutes ago via an API (e.g., an API to the social networking site provided by a social networking server, which allows messages to be posted in response to a user's message) in response to the posted message **202**N by user_one **206**. The posted message **202**N+1 can be transmitted automatically (e.g., by a monitoring server based on rules stored in a database) or manually (e.g., by an operator of a monitoring server).

What is claimed is:

1. A computer-implemented method, comprising:

detecting a message communicated using a social networking account, wherein the social networking account is associated with a customer communications apparatus;

determining that the message satisfies a response criteria, wherein determining that the message satisfies the response criteria includes determining that the message articulates a comment and refers to a pre-determined entity associated with the response criteria;

selecting a customer service communications apparatus associated with the pre-determined entity;

transmitting code, wherein the transmitted code causes a communications initiation feature to be displayed at the customer communications apparatus associated with the social networking account, wherein the communications initiation feature is associated with a stored credential, and wherein the transmitted code causes the communications initiation feature to become selectable at a future time;

receiving selection information representing a selection of the communications initiation feature, wherein the selection information includes a parameter associated with the selection of the communications initiation feature and origin information, the origin information representing the social networking account from which the message was communicated;

validating the selection of the communications initiation feature, wherein validating includes using the origin information to identify that the selection information is associated with the social networking account and using the parameter to compare the selection information with the stored credential associated with the communications initiation feature; and

facilitating communications between the customer communications apparatus and the customer service communications apparatus when the selection of the communications initiation feature is successfully validated.

2. The method of claim **1**, wherein facilitating communications includes relaying communications between the customer communications apparatus and the customer service communications apparatus.

3. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

receiving invitee information from the customer service communications apparatus, the invitee information specifying an additional social networking account; and

transmitting additional code that causes an additional communications initiation feature to be displayed at an additional customer communications apparatus upon the additional social networking account being activated at the additional customer communications apparatus.

4. The method of claim **3**, further comprising:

receiving additional selection information representing a selection of the additional communications initiation feature, wherein the additional selection information is received from an additional computing apparatus and includes validation information including credentials associated with the additional social networking account;

validating the selection of the additional communications feature by using the validation information; and

facilitating communications between the additional customer communications apparatus and a customer service communications apparatus when the selection of the additional communications feature is validated.

5. The method of claim **4**, wherein transmitting the additional code is such that the code is received at a server that

facilitates communications between accounts of the social network, and wherein the server forwards the code to the additional customer communications apparatus.

6. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

receiving subsequent scheduling information from a communications apparatus, the subsequent scheduling information representing a future time period;

transmitting additional code, wherein the additional code causes an additional communications initiation feature to be displayed at a communications apparatus prior to becoming selectable, wherein the additional code causes the additional communications initiation feature, while still being displayed, to become selectable at the beginning of the future time period, and wherein the additional code prevents selection of the additional communications initiation feature at the end of the future time period.

7. The method of claim **1**, wherein the method is executed at a server, and wherein the facilitating communications includes facilitating chat communications.

8. The method of claim **1**, wherein facilitating communications includes facilitating live video communications.

9. The method of claim **1**, wherein the communications initiation feature is a hypertext transfer protocol link.

10. A system, comprising:

a processor; and

a storage medium containing instructions which, when executed on the processor, causes the processor to perform operations including:

detecting a message communicated using a social networking account, wherein the social networking account is associated with a customer communications apparatus;

determining that the message satisfies a response criteria, wherein determining that the message satisfies the response criteria includes determining that the message articulates a comment and refers to a pre-determined entity associated with the response criteria;

selecting a customer service communications apparatus associated with the pre-determined entity;

transmitting code, wherein the transmitted code causes a communications initiation feature to be displayed at the customer communications apparatus associated with the social networking account, wherein the communications initiation feature is associated with a stored credential, and wherein the transmitted code causes the communications initiation feature to become selectable at a future time;

receiving selection information representing a selection of the communications initiation feature, wherein the selection information includes a parameter associated with the selection of the communications initiation feature and origin information, the origin information representing the social networking account from which the message was communicated;

validating the selection of the communications initiation feature, wherein validating includes using the origin information to identify that the selection information is associated with the social networking account and using the parameter to compare the selection information with the stored credential associated with the communications initiation feature; and

facilitating communications between the customer communications apparatus and the customer service communications apparatus when the selection of the communications initiation feature is successfully validated.

11. The system of claim **10**, wherein facilitating communications includes relaying communications between the customer communications apparatus and the customer service communications apparatus.

12. The system of claim **10**, wherein the operations further include:

receiving invitee information from the customer service communications apparatus, the invitee information specifying an additional social networking account; and

transmitting additional code that causes an additional communications initiation feature to be displayed at an additional customer communications apparatus upon the additional social networking account being activated at the additional customer communications apparatus.

13. The system of claim **12**, wherein the operations further include:

receiving additional selection information representing a selection of the additional communications initiation feature, wherein the additional selection information is received from an additional computing apparatus and includes validation information including credentials associated with the additional social networking account;

validating the selection of the additional communications feature by using the validation information; and

facilitating communications between the additional customer communications apparatus and a customer service communications apparatus when the selection of the additional communications feature is validated.

14. The system of claim **13**, wherein transmitting the additional code is such that the code is received at a server that facilitates communications between accounts of the social network, and wherein the server forwards the code to the additional customer communications apparatus.

15. The system of claim **10**, wherein the operations further include:

receiving subsequent scheduling information from a communications apparatus, the subsequent scheduling information representing a future time period;

transmitting additional code, wherein the additional code causes an additional communications initiation feature to be displayed at a communications apparatus prior to becoming selectable, wherein the additional code causes the additional communications initiation feature, while still being displayed, to become selectable at the beginning of the future time period, and wherein the additional code prevents selection of the additional communications initiation feature at the end of the future time period.

16. The system of claim **10**, wherein the system includes a server, and wherein the facilitating communications includes facilitating chat communications.

17. The system of claim **10**, wherein facilitating communications includes facilitating live video communications.

18. The system of claim **10**, wherein the communications initiation feature is a hypertext transfer protocol link.

19. A computer-program product tangibly embodied in a non-transitory machine-readable storage medium having instructions stored thereon, the instructions operable to cause a processing apparatus to perform operations including:

detecting a message communicated using a social networking account, wherein the social networking account is associated with a customer communications apparatus;

determining that the message satisfies a response criteria, wherein determining that the message satisfies the response criteria includes determining that the message

articulates a comment and refers to a pre-determined entity associated with the response criteria;

selecting a customer service communications apparatus associated with the pre-determined entity;

transmitting code, wherein the transmitted code causes a communications initiation feature to be displayed at the customer communications apparatus associated with the social networking account, wherein the communications initiation feature is associated with a stored credential, and wherein the transmitted code causes the communications initiation feature to become selectable at a future time;

receiving selection information representing a selection of the communications initiation feature, wherein the selection information includes a parameter associated with the selection of the communications initiation feature and origin information, the origin information representing the social networking account from which the message was communicated;

validating the selection of the communications initiation feature, wherein validating includes using the origin information to identify that the selection information is associated with the social networking account and using the parameter to compare the selection information with the stored credential associated with the communications initiation feature; and

facilitating communications between the customer communications apparatus and the customer service communications apparatus when the selection of the communications initiation feature is successfully validated.

20. The computer-program product of claim **19**, wherein facilitating communications includes relaying communications between the customer communications apparatus and the customer service communications apparatus.

21. The computer-program product of claim **19**, wherein the operations further include:

receiving invitee information from the customer service communications apparatus, the invitee information specifying an additional social networking account; and

transmitting additional code that causes an additional communications initiation feature to be displayed at an additional customer communications apparatus upon the additional social networking account being activated at the additional customer communications apparatus.

22. The computer-program product of claim **21**, wherein the operations further include:

receiving additional selection information representing a selection of the additional communications initiation feature, wherein the additional selection information is received from an additional computing apparatus and includes validation information including credentials associated with the additional social networking account;

validating the selection of the additional communications feature by using the validation information; and

facilitating communications between the additional customer communications apparatus and a customer service communications apparatus when the selection of the additional communications feature is validated.

23. The computer-program product of claim **22**, wherein transmitting the additional code is such that the code is received at a server that facilitates communications between accounts of the social network, and wherein the server forwards the code to the additional customer communications apparatus.

24. The computer-program product of claim **19**, wherein the operations further include:

receiving subsequent scheduling information from a communications apparatus, the subsequent scheduling information representing a future time period;

transmitting additional code, wherein the additional code causes an additional communications initiation feature to be displayed at a communications apparatus prior to becoming selectable, wherein the additional code causes the additional communications initiation feature, while still being displayed, to become selectable at the beginning of the future time period, and wherein the additional code prevents selection of the additional communications initiation feature at the end of the future time period.

25. The computer-program product of claim **19**, wherein the system includes a server, and wherein the facilitating communications includes facilitating chat communications.

26. The computer-program product of claim **19**, wherein facilitating communications includes facilitating live video communications.

27. The computer-program product of claim **19**, wherein the communications initiation feature is a hypertext transfer protocol link.

28. The computer-implemented method of claim **1**, wherein parameters include a number of times the communications initiations feature was previously selected, a sender profile associated with the social networking account, an amount of time the communications initiation feature has been displayed, or a time of the selection of the communications initiation feature.

29. The computer-implemented method of claim **1**, wherein the stored credential is associated with an administrator server.

30. The computer-implemented method of claim **1**, wherein comparing includes determining whether the parameter matches the stored credential.

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